

Partners:

- Leibniz-Zentrum für Agrarlandschaftsforschung (ZALF) e.V., Germany
- The James Hutton Institute, United Kingdom
- Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (INRA), France
- Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro (UTAD), Portugal
- Uniwersytet Rolniczy im. Hugona Kollataja w Krakowie (UAK), Poland
- Agricultural University Plovdiv (AUP), Bulgaria
- Videncentret for Landbrug (VFL), Denmark
- University of Hohenheim (UHOH), Germany



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Prospects for Farmers' Support:
Advisory Services in European AKIS

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Motivation

Farmers throughout Europe are facing changing political conditions and a strong pressure from markets and citizens to adjust and to innovate. They need timely access to knowledge and information, to training and education and to facilitating and supporting services.

PRO AKIS is a European research and action project that investigates agricultural advisory services within the context of Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems (AKIS). The project aims to answer the question: How and from what sources can farmers get reliable and relevant knowledge, orientation and support to continuously evolve, to successfully solve problems and to respond to external expectations and development opportunities?

Agricultural knowledge and information systems (AKIS) describe the exchange of knowledge and supporting services between many diverse actors from the first, second or third sector in rural areas. AKIS provide farmers with relevant knowledge and networks around innovations in agriculture.

Advisory services are one essential means to enhance problem solving, information sharing and innovation generating processes. In a functioning AKIS these services can be provided by various actors, among them formal public and private extension services, training and post-secondary education bodies, NGOs but also by members of administration or research institutions. Since 2009, there is a European regulation obliging member states to set up a 'Farm Advisory System'.



PRO AKIS will :

- develop a conceptual framework for the assessment of AKIS
- provide an inventory of AKIS institutions and interactions in the EU-27 as a searchable database
- investigate challenges in case studies around
 - small-scale farmers' access to relevant and reliable knowledge (Bulgaria, Portugal, Poland, UK)
 - bridging scientific research topics and farmers' demands (Bulgaria, Germany, France, Poland)
 - offering appropriate support for diverse rural actors that form networks around innovations in agriculture and rural areas (Germany, France, Portugal, UK)
- reveal successes, strengths and weaknesses of the specific knowledge systems through comparative analyses and assessments of these case studies
- develop policy recommendations for strengthening European agricultural innovation systems.



PRO AKIS Methodology

- the project partners will undertake empirical research on the formal and informal AKIS in the EU 27 and conduct case studies in the partner countries on the performances of advisory services
- AKIS stakeholders, experts and policy advisors will accompany PRO AKIS, with an opportunity to participate in workshops and seminars. They will be invited to share interim findings and contribute through assessments of results systematically throughout the course of the project
- findings will be made available to interested communities and to the public at large in a timely manner through a range of dissemination activities.